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F R I D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

- Secretary-General welcomes "first day of peace" in El Salvador.

- Ninth inspection team of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) verifies Iraqi stockpile of centrifuge parts and materials used to produce enriched uranium.

- Russian Federation to continue Soviet Union's membership, rights and obligations in IAEA.

- International Committee of Red Cross visits detainees in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, for first time in 12 years.

- Canada contributes $1 million to United Nations humanitarian assistance to Croatia, Slovenia and Yugoslavia.

- Measures taken by nine countries to ensure equal rights for women among issues to be reviewed at session of Committee on Discrimination against Women, to be held at Headquarters from 20 to 31 January.

- United Nations seminar on Palestinian question to be held in Nicosia, Cyprus, from 21 to 24 January.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali arrived last night in San Salvador, accompanied by Under-Secretary-General Marrack Goulding, his Personal Representative for Central America, Alvaro de Soto, and Iqbal Riza, Special Delegate of the Secretary-General and Chief of Mission of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL).

Speaking to the press upon arrival, the Secretary-General said that with the culmination of the negotiating process, the complex task of monitoring compliance with the agreements fell upon ONUSAL, which had already been observing the situation of human rights in El Salvador for a few months. However, he said, the principal responsibility lay with the two parties, the Government of El Salvador and the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN).

Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali said he would tell President Cristiani of El Salvador that the United Nations would spare no effort to contribute to consolidate peace in his country and in Central America as a whole.

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For information media—not an official record

Before leaving El Salvador, the Secretary-General met with President Cristiani and visited the ONUSAL headquarters, where he received a briefing on the Mission's mandate and its operation modalities.

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The ninth inspection team of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has returned from a visit to Iraq, during which it verified Iraqi stockpile of centrifuge parts and other materials used for the construction of weapons of mass destruction.

The IAEA has been carrying out inspections of Iraqi weapons sites with the cooperation and assistance of the Special Commission on the Destruction of Iraqi Weapons, a United Nations body set up by the Security Council in April 1991.

The main objective of the visit, which took place from 12 to 15 January, was to verify recent information received from Germany and other Member States concerning Iraqi procurement of large quantities of raw materials and components required for the manufacture of centrifuges to produce enriched uranium.

According to the IAEA, the Iraqis acknowledged the procurement of these materials and said they had been destroyed or "rendered harmless" before the Agency's inspections began last year.

The Agency said further that the results of this inspection had removed a number of inconsistencies remaining from previous inspections. In the opinion of the experts who took part in the inspection, the Iraqis' centrifuge enrichment programme had not progressed to a point where they could have started a sizeable production of centrifuges, although, given time, they would have been successful in doing so.

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The Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Hans Blix, has addressed a letter to the President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin, acknowledging a note from the Russian Federation that it will be continuing the Soviet Union's membership, rights and obligations in the IAEA.

Mr Blix referred in his letter to a voluntary offer made by the Soviet Union in 1985 enabling the Agency to verify the exclusively peaceful use of a large number of nuclear installations. He said such inspections would be of potential use in the future.

The Director-General also referred to the non-payment by the Soviet Union of its assessed contribution to the Agency for 1991 and said that this had forced the IAEA to curtail its planned programme - including safeguards inspections - by 13 per cent. He acknowledged the difficult situation facing

the Russian Federation, but said he trusted that high priority would be given to payment of its contributions, so that the Agency could continue to pursue its important activities.

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For the first time since the start of the Cambodian conflict, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been able to visit, in accordance with its customary working procedures, persons detained in the capital city of Phnom Penh. The Committee has been trying for over 12 years to gain access to persons detained in connection with the conflict.

In a press release issued at Headquarters, the Red Cross said that on 14 January, ICRC delegates saw 290 prisoners all eligible for release under the agreement signed in Paris on 23 October last year. The day after the visit, the detainees were released under ICRC auspices, in the presence of Prince Sihanouk, Chairman of Cambodia's Supreme National Council.

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Canada has announced a contribution of $1 million for humanitarian assistance to Croatia, Slovenia and Yugoslavia, in response to a joint-fund United Nations appeal for a relief programme to aid some 600,000 displaced persons in the region.

Last December, the Secretary-General's report on Yugoslavia to the Security Council recommended a six-month assistance programme estimated at some $24.3 million, to be coordinated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Making the announcement yesterday, Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs, Barbara McDougall, said the contribution underlined Canada's support for the work of the United Nations and its determination to alleviate the suffering of innocent civilians in the war-torn region. The funds would be distributed between three United Nations Agencies, the UNHCR, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

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The Committee on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, meeting at Headquarters for its eleventh session from 20 to 31 January, will hear reports from nine countries - Barbados, Ghana, Honduras, China, Czechoslovakia, El Salvador, Spain, Sri Lanka and Venezuela - on measures they have taken to ensure that women in their countries participate equally in political, economic, social and cultural life.

The 23-member expert Committee monitors implementation of the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the single most authoritative legal document produced during the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985). As of 15 January, 111 States had ratified the Convention.

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At this session the Committee will also examine articles of the Convention relating to violence against women, sexual harassment and exploitation of women, including trafficking and prostitution.

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A just settlement of the Palestinian question and the safety and protection of the Palestinians under occupation will be among the subjects discussed at the twenty-ninth United Nations Seminar and non-governmental organization Symposium on the Question of Palestine, to be held in Nicosia, Cyprus, from 20 to 24 January.

Organized by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the meeting will be part of the Committee's continuing efforts to promote a just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian question, thus contributing to the peace process by encouraging a balanced and constructive discussion of the issues by the parties concerned, at the governmental and non-governmental levels.

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